

Heroes of Battle, Part Two

By Keith Baker



Prestige Classes

Heroes of Battle presents four new prestige classes. While these classes could be found anywhere in Eberron, there are a few cultures that are especially well-suited to these classes.

Combat Medic. During the Last War, Thrane had the largest force of characters with levels in the combat medic PrC. Aside from its strong reliance on divine magic to bolster its troops, the ministry of the Silver Flame fights evil by merciful acts, and many members of the ministry are trained in the healing arts. In the armies of other nations, combat medics are usually agents of House Jorasco. The House of Healing maintains a corps of healers and combat medics, and many nations rely on these mercenary agents of mercy. Other combat medics are usually devotees of Boldrei, Olladra, or the Silver Flame. Even during the Last War, followers of the Flame were found throughout the Five Nations; many placed national loyalty before allegiance to Flamekeep.

Dread Commando. These soldiers can be found in any army, but the best known commando units are those of the Valenar elves and goblinoids of Darguun. Dread commandos are trained to be stealthy even while armored, making them excellent shock troops. Stealth is one of the primary weapons of the Valenar; while the elves are known for their terrifying cavalry charges, a small warband will often use guerilla tactics to defeat an enemy, striking with patience and precision. Valenar commandos usually begin as rangers or scouts.

In Darguun, all of the different races have their own dread commando traditions. Among the Dhakaani goblins, the taarka'khash rangers frequently take two levels of dread commando to offset the penalties of armor. Goblin legends say that the Dhakaani emperor maintained a squad of elite warriors known as the Kech Nasaar, "Keepers of Night." The Kech Nasaar heroes possessed four or more levels of dread commando and wore full plate enchanted with the *shadow* and *silent moves* properties. They have not been seen since the fall of the empire, but some goblins say that the Kech Nasaar are watching in the shadows, waiting to stake their claim to the new throne.

Legendary Leader. Aundair has more war wizards than any other nation, Thrane has more paladins, clerics, and adepts than its neighbors, and Karrnath supplements its military might with necromancy. Breland relies on the skill and courage of its leaders to overcome these obstacles. Karrnath may be home to the Rekkenmark Academy, but many of the most innovative commanders of the war emerged from Breland, and their charisma and cunning often enabled their armies to victory against seemingly superior foes. While many of these heroes were slain over the course of the last century, Breland is still a land of legends. A DM using *Heroes of Battle* may want to modify the class levels of notable Brelish leaders to include a few levels in this PrC. Thus you could end up with King Boranel (CG male human aristocrat 2/fighter 5/legendary leader 3) or Handan Dol (LN male dwarf fighter 5/warrior 6/legendary leader 5). Handan Dol is the commander of the Redcloak Battalion in *Sharn, City of Towers*.

While Breland is renowned for its legendary leaders, every nation has its heroes. Next to Breland, Valenar is probably the most likely place to find members of this class, but all of the armies of the Five Nations had a legendary leader or two -- though many fell in battle.

War Weaver. The mystical tradition of the war weaver can be traced back to the elves of Aerenal. The Aereni know as much about life as they do about death, and they were the first to discover the technique of weaving threads of life together to benefit from a single spell. The Arcane Congress devoted considerable effort to replicating this technique, but it took the Last War to produce the breakthrough that brought war weaving to Aundair. By now, the other nations may have duplicated the techniques the Aundairians have been using against them. Or perhaps this task will fall to a party of adventurers: finding a way to steal the secrets of war weaving on behalf of Breland or Karrnath!



Fun with Warriors

While prestige classes are well and good, one of the principles of the *Eberron Campaign Setting* is that most NPCs use NPC classes, and are relatively low level. As a result, the armies of Khorvaire shouldn't be brimming with dread commandos, and legendary leaders really should be legendary. However, *Heroes of Battle* introduces a few feats that can add color to armies comprised primarily of warriors.

Guerilla Warrior and Guerilla Scout are excellent feats for creating a more versatile squad of warriors. These feats are especially appropriate for characters from the Eldeen Reaches, Shadow Marches, or Talenta Plains. You don't want to make the halfling a full rogue, but you want him to be sneakier than his Brelish counterparts? Make him a warrior with the Guerilla Warrior feat, wearing light armor and with maximum ranks in Hide and Move Silently.

Shield Wall and Coordinated Shot are ways to make masses of warriors more of a challenge for higher level opponents. Archers with the Ready Shot feat can also prove an unpleasant surprise to the half-orc barbarian used to charging his foes!

Choosing a War

So: you've decided to run a military adventure in Eberron. But where? And when? War has shaped the history of Eberron, and there are a host of battles to choose from.

The Last War

The conflict that has the greatest impact on the lives of most of the people of modern Khorvaire is the civil war that shattered the nation of Galifar, a century-long campaign optimistically known as the Last War.

When generating a campaign around the Last War, it is important to establish the goals. Are you exploring the very beginning of the war? Or the end? Is this a campaign of its own, or is it the prologue to an adventure set in the postwar era?

Building a war campaign as a bridge leading into a more traditional series of adventures set after the war is an excellent tool for bringing characters together and establishing them as adventurers in the modern age. After a few missions on the battlefield, adventurers can emerge as 3rd or 4th-level characters -- ready to tackle more powerful dungeons or challenges in the world beyond the war. The experience can also provide them with important connections to NPCs. An old war buddy might need a helping hand. A former commander could hire the party for dangerous work based on her knowledge of their skills. An enemy soldier could be met in the neutral ground of an inn -- do the characters still hold a grudge? Even their actions in the war could form the basis for future adventures. In one of their early missions, the heroes must help secure a stockpile of gold in the vaults of Metrol. After the Mourning, they are among the only people who know the location of the vault -- can they lead an expedition into the Mournland to recover the gold? And what if it's already been seized by the Lord of Blades?

A full history of the Last War is sadly beyond the scope of this article. A few of the major battles are mentioned in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* and *The Five Nations*, and others will be described over the course of time. For now, look at the map, choose your battlefields and combatants, and build from there. All of the nations fought each other at one point or another, and each nation had its own flavor on the field of battle. While all of the Five Nations used magic, Aundair made the greatest use of arcane magic, while Thrane had strong divine support from the Church of the Silver Flame. Karrnath combined grim discipline with the power of necromancy. Cyre made extensive use of mercenaries in the early stages of the war, and used the greatest number of warforged troops towards the end of it. And Breland relied on its clever generals and industrial capability, outmatching its enemies' abilities in the production of siege engines and other mundane tools of war. Chapter Two and Chapter Three of *Heroes of Battle* presents a host of ideas for adventures and battlefield encounters. Choose your sides, and make sure that the forces involved reflect the nature of each nation involved; between the *Eberron Campaign Setting* book and *Heroes of Battle*, you should have all the tools you need.

The Lycanthropic Purge

In 832 YK, the Church of the Silver Flame responded to the pleas of the people of Western Aundair and Breland. These regions were under attack by waves of shapeshifters -- packs of savage werewolves and cunning wererats, who were carving a swath of death and infection across western Khorvaire. This was the beginning of the Lycanthropic Purge, which started as a war against these vicious killers but ultimately resulted in the virtual extinction of all lycanthropes.

The Lycanthropic Purge can be an interesting backdrop for adventure, regardless of which side the party chooses to explore. In the early stage of the conflict, players could assume the roles of Silver Flame templars

protecting an Aundairian village against an anticipated onslaught: but will the lycanthropes rely on brute force, or seek to infiltrate and infect from within? A higher level party could lead a force against a shapeshifter stronghold deep in the Eldeen Reaches, fighting both lycanthropes and the beasts they control through their empathic abilities. Alternately, players could assume the role of shifters or noble lycanthropes caught in a region under siege by Silver Puritans. Can they find a way to break through the enemy lines and lead any innocents to the gates of Lamannia?

For the most part, the Purge is a struggle between the discipline and divine magic of the Silver Flame and the raw power of the lycanthropes. The shapeshifters' ability to hide among humanity and to swell their ranks through infection adds to the challenge of the battles.

The Battles of the Future

No one won the Last War. The conflict was brought to an abrupt halt by the terrible destruction of the Mourning. The nature of the Mourning remains a mystery, and for the moment no nation dares to fully return to the field of battle until the threat of the Mourning has been laid to rest.

But tensions remain -- and the war is not truly over. The Valenar elves still battle the Darguuls in the Mournland, and cross blades with the Karrns in the Talenta Plains. The lords of Aundair eye the Eldeen Reaches with covetous eyes. The survivors of Cyre seek a new land to replace their lost kingdom. The Thranes still despise the Karrns, and the feeling is mutual.

These struggles could be a temporary distraction from the normal events of a campaign, or they could be the focus of it. Perhaps the party are members of a Valenar warband, and they are traveling the east in search of glory for their ancestors, joining in any battle they can find. Maybe they are Karrns stationed at Fort Bones, fighting elf and halfling raiders while dealing with the internal conflicts between the soldiers loyal to King Kaius and those who favor the Emerald Claw. Perhaps they are Dhakaani goblins, engaged in full-scale wars with the other Kech clans to determine the future of the empire. Or maybe the Treaty of Thronehold finally breaks and the heroes must take sides as the remnants of the Five Nations return to the war for the Kingdom of Galifar.

The advantage of these modern-day conflicts is that players don't know the outcome. In a campaign based in the Last War, the players know that it will eventually come to an end with the Treaty of Thronehold. If the battles begin again, the outcome is a mystery. Will one nation finally seize regain control of the old kingdom? Or will the Mourning come again? Are these the final days of Eberron?

This ideas are just the beginning. Adventurers could explore the ancient war between dragons and rakshasa, or the elven rebellion against the giants. They could take the role of the orcish Gatekeepers fighting against the horrors of Xoriat, or the dragonmarked houses battling the aberrant forces of Lord Halas Tarkanan during the War of the Mark. Conflict is part of the foundation of Eberron -- and *Heroes of Battle* gives you everything you need to set these adventures in motion!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the World of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron** Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War* for Wizards of

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